

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-08 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /066 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2272

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1511

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR JA KS

SUBJ: ROKG PROTESTS JAPANESE TOKTO (TAKESHIMA) OVERFLIGHT

SUMMARY: RECENT SERIES OF INCIDENTS, CAPPED BY MAINICHI TV NEWS HELICOPTER OVERFLIGHT OF TOKTO (TAKESHIMA) FEBRUARY 19, HAS LED ROKG TO PROTEST JAPANESE INTRUSION INTO ROK AIR SPACE OVER THE DISPUTED ISLAND. ALTHOUGH BOTH GOVERNMENTS APPARENTLY CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING INCIDENTS FROM DAMAGING ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS, PRESS AND PUBLIC HERE, WHILE NOW RELATIVELY CALM, COULD RESPOND TO FURTHER INCIDENTS BY REACTING WITH MORE HEAT THAN SITUATION CALLS FOR. JAPANESE EMBASSY HAS RECOMMENDED TO GOJ THAT EFFORT BE MADE TO AVOID INCIDENTS IN NEAR FUTURE WHICH MIGHT WORSEN PRESENTLY MANAGEABLE SITUATION.

1. MOFA ASIAN AFFAIRS BUREAU DEPUTY DIRECTOR KONG NO MYUNG CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF FEBRUARY 22 THAT HE HAD DELIVERED TO JAPANESE CHARGE MABUCHI HARUYUKI FEBRUARY 21 ROKG ORAL PROTEST OF OVERFLIGHT OF TOKTO (TAKESHIMA) BY MAINICHI TELEVISION (RKB) HELICOPTER. OVERFLIGHT, WHICH TOOK PLACE FEBRUARY 19, WAS THIRD CONFIDENTIAL

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INCIDENT INVOLVING TOKTO THIS MONTH. YOMIURI SHIMBUN PLANE OVERFLEW TOKTO FEBRUARY 8 AND JAPANESE DEMONSTRATORS IN OSAKA BURNED ROK FLAG FEBRUARY 16 TO PROTEST CONTINUED ROK POSSESSION OF THE DISPUTED ISLAND. FEBRUARY 8 OVERFLIGHT WAS SUBJECT OF ROKG PROTEST FEBRUARY 15.

2. KONG SAID HE HAD TOLD MABUCHI THAT ROKG WAS CONCERNED THAT

ROK NATIONAL FEELING WOULD BE STIMULATED BY NEWS PLANE INTRUSIONS IN WAY WHICH MIGHT BE DETRIMENTAL TO INTERESTS OF ROK AND JAPAN. HE HAD URGED THAT GOJ TAKE MEASURES, SUCH AS ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE TO JAPANESE MEDIA COMPANIES, TO DISCOURAGE "ADVENTUROUS ACTS" BY JAPANESE NATIONALS. KONG SAID THAT HELICOPTER FLIGHT TO TOKTO FROM OKI ISLAND WAS NOT ENTIRELY SAFE AND THERE WAS ALWAYS POSSIBILITY THAT PLANE MIGHT RUN OUT OF FUEL OR BECOME LOST AND GO DOWN AND THAT KOREANS COQZD BE BLAMED EVEN IF THEY NEVER WERE AWARE OF PLANE'S EXISTENCE. HE ALSO SAID HE EXPRESSED CONCERN TO MABUCHI THAT ROK COMBAT POLICE WHO GARRISON THE ISLAND MIGHT NOT REACT WITH COMPLETE RESTRAINT, DESPITE ORDER AND GOVERNMENT POLICY TO THAT EFFECT, AND THAT INCIDENT COULD RESULT. KONG SAID THAT MABUCHI NATURALLY DENIED THAT INCIDENT INVOLVED VIOLATION OF ROK AIR SPACE BUT AT SAME TIME AGREED WITH ROK CONCERN.

3. KONG SAID HE WAS WORRIED THAT IF THINGS ESCALATE AT PRESENT PACE, SITUATION COULD BECOME SERIOUS, AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT USG WOULD URGE JAPANESE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT HE THOUGHT BOTH GOVERNMENTS WERE AWARE OF U.S. VIEWS ON NEED FOR RESTRAINT IN ROKG-GOJ RELATIONS.

4. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF FEBRUARY 22 MABUCHI CONFIRMED THAT KONG HAD CALLED HIM IN. ACCORDING TO MABUCHI, PROBLEM IS BASICALLY CAUSED BY NEW GENERATION OF JAPANESE JOURNALISTS WHO ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH TOKTO BACKGROUND AND SEE IT ONLY AS ANOTHER COLORFUL NEWS STORY. H SAID THAT IT WAS HIS VIEW THAT IF THERE WAS ANOTHER OVERFLIGHT INCIDENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE IT WOULD CAUSE A PROBLEM FOR JAPAN AND KOREA, ALTHOUGH ROK CONFIDENTIAL

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FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS AT THIS TIME STILL TREATING THE MATTER WITH GREAT RESTRAINT AND UNDERSTANDING. HE SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY KONG'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ROK DEFENSE MINISTRY AS BEING "PARTICULARLY OFFENDED" AND SAID THAT KONG HAD SAID THAT ALTHOUGH ROKG INTENDED TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM WITH RESTRAINT BECAUSE OF LARGER ROK/JAPAN INTERESTS AT STAKE, ONE HOTHEAD IN THE ROK POLICE GARRISON ON THE ISLAND COULD REACT EMOTIONALLY AND FIRE HIS WEAPON DESPITE BEST EFFORTS OF ROKG--THUS RESTRAINT ON PART OF GOJ ALSO ESSENTIAL.

5. MABUCHI SAID HE HAD ASKED GAIMUSHO TO CLAMP DOWN ON FUTURE FLIGHTS OVER TOKTO, POINTING OUT DANGER TO JAPANESE INTERESTS WHIMH LIKELY TO BE CAUSED BY FURTHER FLIGHTS AT THIS TIME. HE ALSO ADVISED KONG THAT HE HAD MADE THIS RECOMMENDATION TO TTKYO. IN CONVERSATION WITH PRESS FOLLOWING MOFA MEETING, MABUCHI SAID HE TOLD REPORTERS THAT PRINCIPLE IS PRINCIPLE, BUT GOVERNMENTS MUST ALSO BE CONCERNED ABOUT LARGER INTERESTS, AND GOJ POSITION WAS THAT TOKTO (TAKESHIMA) INCIDENT SHOULD

BE SETTLED PEACEFULLY.

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6. MOST NEWSPAPERS COVERED STORY ON FRONT PAGE. IN ADDITION TO REPORTING KONG'S PROTEST OF INTRUSION, ROK PRESS CHARACTERIZED KONG AS REITERATING KOREAN CLAIMS TO THE ISLAND, REQUESTING JAPANESE TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT FUTURE INCIDENTS AND STATING JAPANESE BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAMAGE TO ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS RESULTING FROM RECENT EXERCISE OF THE ISSUE, WHILE STRESSING THAT PRESSURES SEEM TO COME FROM OPPOSITION, NOT GOJ. PRESS ALSO SAID KONG PROTESTED JAPANESE EXTREMIST STUDENTS "DESECRATION" OF KOREAN FLAG AT KOREAN CONSULATE IN OSAKA DURING DEMONSTRATION OVER TOKTO ISSUE. NEWSPAPERS REPORT MABUCHI TO HAVE RESPONDED THAT IN LIGHT OF JAPAN'S CLAIM TO THE ISLAND, THE OVERFLIGHT COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AN INTRUSION, BUT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT REGARDS THE WHOLE DISPUTE AS "REGRETTABLE" AND HOPES IT CAN BE SETTLED PEACEABLY.

7. PRESS ALSO CARRIED REPORTS OF TYPICAL ANTI-JAPANESE FULMINATIONS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF RULING AND OPPOSITION PARTIES. PAK CH'OL, RULING DRP SPOKESMAN, CRITICIZED JAPANESE LEADERS' CARELESSNESS FOR ALLOWING SELFISH PEOPLE TO RAISE TOKTO ISSUE, AND CONTENDED THE INTRUSION SHOWED THE HAUGHTY, UNDERHANDED, AND IRRESPONSIBLE ASPECT OF JAPANESE CHARACTER. PAK
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ADVISED ROKG TO HOLD ISLAND BY FORCE, AND TO ESTABLISH KOREA'S RIGHTS BY INTERNATIONAL LAW. KO CHAE-CH'ONG, OPPOSITION NDP SPOKESMAN, ALSO EXPRESSED COLORFUL INDIGNATION AND RECOMMENDED USE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. IN ADDITION, HE COUNSELLED ROKG NOT TO LET MATTER DROP WITH A "TEPID PROTEST".

8. COMMENT: BOTH MOFA AND JAPANESE EMBASSY APPEAR TO BE RE-ACTING WITH RESTRAINT TO THIS LATEST SERIES OF TOKTO-RELATED INCIDENTS. IF JAPANESE CAN KEEP MEDIA FLIGHTS AWAY FROM ISLAND, ISSUE SHOULD RETURN TO THE OBSCURITY IT DESERVES.
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Message Attributes

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